

The Navy and Marine Corps Magazine for Afloat and Shore Safety

# SEA & SHORE

SPRING 2007

**What's smokin'  
in this issue:**

*Carl Vinson Sailors*  
**Learn DUI Realities**

**BACK ON THE IRON HORSE:**

Motorcycling After a Six-Month Deployment

**Work Hard, Play Hard... Die Young**

**Seventh Annual Traffic-Safety Magazine**

Vol. 9, No. 2, 2007

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Mishaps waste our time and resources. They take our Sailors, Marines and civilian employees away from their units and workplaces and put them in hospitals, wheelchairs and coffins. Mishaps ruin equipment and weapons. They diminish our readiness. This magazine's goal is to help make sure that personnel can devote their time and energy to the mission, and that any losses are due to enemy action, not to our own errors, shortcuts or failure to manage risk. We believe there is only one way to do any task: the way that follows the rules and takes precautions against hazards. Combat is dangerous and demanding enough; the time to learn to do a job right is before combat starts.

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Driving this car is John Whatley at RaceLegal.com, San Diego, Calif.  
Used with permission.



Cover graphics by Jeff Hobrath, PRC (AW), USN (Ret.)



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# Honor the **Blue Threat**, Or It Will Kill You

By Cdr. Michael A. Carambas,  
CO, VT-4

**T**he threat on the battlefield, the airspace above, and the surrounding sea is well-understood by our VT-4 instructors, who have had an opportunity to engage the enemies of our nation and allies overseas. As warriors and student warriors, we constantly are training and learning to get our chance at the global war on terrorism.

Here at the Warbucks, we constantly are briefing operational and personal risk management, both on and off duty, as a squadron and as individuals, so we safely can complete training and strap on our jets and prop aircraft and take the battle to our enemies. Some may feel this is overkill (so to speak), but I invite your attention to a quote from RADM George Mayer, former CNATRA and currently head of the Naval Safety Center.

“We must view the hazards we face every day, in training or in our everyday lives, in the same way we

view our enemies: as real threats,” said RADM Mayer. “What if we were to always treat low visibility or wet runways as a threat (with the ability to take out an FA-18) equal to that of a surface-to-air missile? What if we viewed fatigue-impaired decisions as a threat as dangerous as an anti-aircraft-artillery piece? What if we approached the threat of following too closely in automobile traffic or the reckless drivers who cut us off on the highway in the same way we deliver weapons into a Red-Threat envelope? We need to treat the threats we can control, the Blue Threats, with the same energy we approach fighting the Red Threats. Because, today, Blue Threats—our errors and poor decisions—are our deadliest enemies.”

Here is someone well-versed in the aviation business as a squadron CO, my former CAG, and battle-group commander. He is an expert in the hazards of operational and training command. I find it

Navy photo by PH3 Rob Gaston



The Blue Threat isn't solely an aviation concept...





...These two motorcyclists, for example, are their own worst enemy because they're not wearing helmets.

intriguing his point to honor the threats while training like we would in combat. We never would think about being late to the target in combat because of the consequences, both to the troops on the ground and to our aircraft. Maybe we should treat entering a low-level route as if we were going downtown to the target. Honoring entry time like honoring the threat is another control we could put in place to mitigate the training threat.

How about a bigger threat, especially during the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays? The weather typically isn't so nice—the winds pick up, making vertical navigation (VNAV) and hitting your point-to-points much more difficult. As played out in safety statistics, though, a bigger threat this time of year is getting around in our personal motor vehicles (PMVs). It's only natural that our thoughts turn to taking some leave, getting back to our hometowns, seeing family and loved ones, and eating holiday meals.

Before we strap into our cars, however, here is something to mull over. Naval Safety Center statistics show PMV mishaps involve six especially hazardous factors: driving between the hours of midnight and 0600, driving during the weekend, not using seat belts, drunk driving, speeding, and driver fatigue. Leadership must engage and address these factors, as a minimum.

As officers, we are all leaders, so we bear the responsibility to address and honor the threats associated with trying to get home. From the Warbucks per-

spective, we conduct safety training and hold work-shift-change briefings to focus on avoiding/mitigating and controlling the hazards encountered on the road. If holiday travels involve being on the road during the late night, over a weekend, or where fatigue can be a factor, we stress stopping, identifying the risk, assessing it, implementing controls, and supervising the risk—sound familiar?

We urge our Sailors to plan departure times so they don't need to hurry—speed kills, in case you haven't heard it before. We also stress using seat belts while driving. Just like flying, honor the threat anytime you're driving and make it back ready to train, fight or simply take care of business. ■

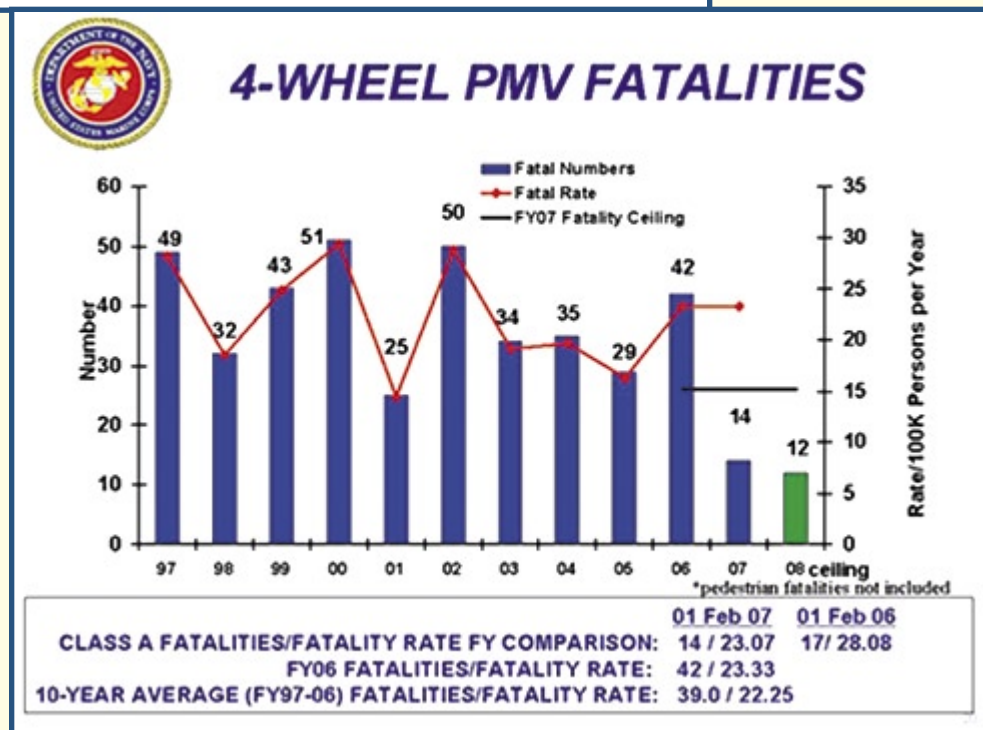
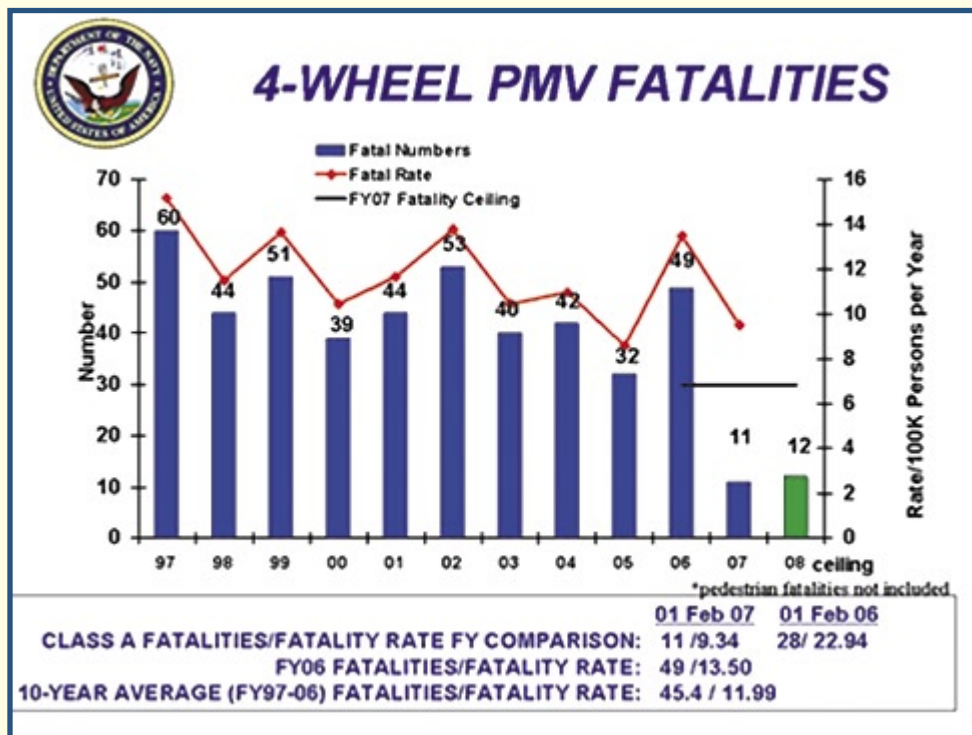
#### *Message From Commander, Naval Safety Center*

*I want all Sailors, Marines and civilians supporting our mission to know that every loss of life, every injury, and every mishap greatly impacts our ability to carry out the mission. As this author noted, I used the September-October 2006 (Blue-Threat focus) issue of Approach to point out the vast majority of mishaps are the result of our own doing. We really are our own worst enemy. The Blue Threat isn't solely an aviation concept; it extends to everything we do, 24/7, on and off duty, in our cars or on our motorcycles. Risk management and prudent decisions are our best defenses against this threat.*

*RADM George Mayer*

# Traffic Crashes Still No. 1 Killer of Sailors, Marines

Good decisions behind the wheel are part of an overall safety campaign to teach Sailors and Marines to practice situational awareness and to recognize and manage risk 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at work or at play. Only by doing such can we anticipate and avoid the hazards that create the following kind of statistics.



## Short Narratives (Oct 06 through Jan 07)

**30 Jan 07** – A sergeant from 1ST MLG, CLR-17 died when he hit a divider, lost control, and collided with another vehicle.

**20 Jan 07** – An FC1 from USS *Mount Whitney* lost control of his vehicle, hit a wall, and was fatally injured.

**07 Jan 07** – An MM1 from NavSubScol Groton was killed when his vehicle was run off the road by an 18-wheeler.

**01 Jan 07** – A corporal from 1 MAW, MAG-12, VMFA-212 died as a result of being hit by a vehicle and receiving a severe head injury.

**29 Dec 06** – An E-3 from USS *Bonhomme Richard* was killed in a single-vehicle crash in Hudspeth County, Texas. The vehicle rolled over and ejected him.

**25 Dec 06** – A PFC from 2NDBN, 1STMAR, suffered fatal injuries after losing control of his car in Las Vegas. He ran off the road and hit a cement barrier and several trees. His vehicle traveled 336 feet before coming to rest. The victim wasn't wearing a seat belt.

**23 Dec 06** – A master sergeant from USS *Oak Hill* died from injuries suffered in a traffic accident Dec. 22, in Springfield, Colo. Also, a corporal from HMM-268 died in a wreck in Saranac Lake, N.Y. He was a front-seat passenger when the driver lost control and hit a tree.

**18 Dec 06** – In Lexington, N.C., a corporal assigned to HQBN 3RD MARDIV was driving to the store in heavy fog. He crossed the centerline of a roadway and was killed in a head-on crash with an oncoming vehicle.

**17 Dec 06** – An E-4 from USS *Ronald Reagan* was killed when he lost control of his vehicle and crashed into the center divider on a highway in San Diego.

**16 Dec 06** – A sergeant from 2nd MAINT BN, 2nd MLG, lost control of his vehicle. He wasn't wearing a seat belt and suffered fatal injuries when the vehicle rolled and ejected him.

**10 Dec 06** – An HM1 from Recruit Training Command was killed in a single-vehicle mishap.

**08 Dec 06** – A senior chief from VFA-115 was killed in a head-on motor-vehicle mishap.

**30 Nov 06** – A staff sergeant from the School of Infantry West slammed into the rear of a tractor-trailer near San Diego and suffered fatal injuries.

**26 Nov 06** – A lance corporal from 1ST BN, 2DMAR, 2D MARDIV was driving when his car was

rear-ended in Jacksonville, N.C. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

**24 Nov 06** – A Marine who had graduated from recruit training two days earlier died in a wreck in Monroe County, Penn. He had been driving when he lost control and hit a tree. He was ejected and pinned beneath the car.

**24 Nov 06** – A midshipman was killed in a car wreck in Annapolis, Md. He was a passenger in the front seat of a car driven by a civilian who crashed into a tree.

**23 Nov 06** – A corporal from 2ND BN, 5TH MAR, 1ST MARDIV died when his vehicle was struck by a drunk driver.

**22 Nov 06** – A corporal from II MEF was speeding on a highway near Richlands, N.C. She lost control, crossed into the southbound lane, and was hit by a truck and a tractor-trailer. In spite of her seat belt, she suffered injuries that proved fatal on 25 Nov.

**09 Nov 06** – A corporal from 4TH MARDIV, 4TH RECON BN, suffered fatal injuries as a passenger in a speeding vehicle driven by a lance corporal who ran into the back of a tractor-trailer.

**04 Nov 06** – A lance corporal from II MHG, II MEF, died in a wreck as a passenger in a car belonging to a fellow corporal. The driver was speeding and hit a telephone pole in North Carolina. The car went airborne for 60 feet and bounced another 40 feet. Alcohol was a suspected factor.

**30 Oct 06** – A seaman recruit from USS *George Washington* suffered serious injuries in a wreck; he subsequently died 20 Nov. He was a passenger in a car driven by a fellow SR who had fallen asleep at the wheel and crashed into a tree along an interstate highway in Chesapeake, Va.

**27 Oct 06** – A PFC from 2D Battalion, 6th Marines, 2D MARDIV suffered fatal injuries when the car he was driving veered across three lanes of traffic, struck a traffic barrier, and then veered back across the traffic. Two passengers had minor injuries. The mishap occurred in Nashua, N.H.

**16 Oct 06** – An E-3 from USS *Harry S. Truman* was killed in a wreck in York County, Va. He was on his way to work when he lost control and ran into a tree.

**09 Oct 06** – In Norfolk, an E-4 and an E-3, both 19 years old and from USS *Harry S. Truman*, died when their car crossed an interstate median and was broadsided by another vehicle.



**07 Oct 06** – A lance corporal from HQ BN, 1ST MARDIV, was killed when a drunk driver ran a stop-light and collided with his car in Los Angeles. The Marine's wife also was killed.

**07 Oct 06** – An MA3 from Mobile Security Squadron Three suffered fatal injuries while driving a rented car in Bahrain. He collided with a light pole. His passenger, an E-2, was injured seriously.

## In the News

### **Traffic Risk Planning System (TRiPS)**

– This online system helps you plan your travel, do a risk assessment of your trip, and get automated suggestions to make your trip safer. To log on, visit the Naval Safety Center website at [www.safetycenter.navy.mil](http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil), click on the TriPS link, and register. You'll get an e-mail verification, and you then can access the program and start planning trips.

### **Driver Behavior Assessment Tool (DBAT)**

– This idea originally was proposed by the Naval Safety Center as an initiative for the Defense Safety Oversight Committee PMV Task Force. However, the Department of Defense approved it as a tool to identify high-risk drivers (those who are more likely to be involved in a traffic mishap than the general military population). These personnel then will receive additional training and counseling.

**PMV Mishap Investigation Template (Navy Only)** – Until this template was developed, investigations of traffic fatalities were little more than a copy of the police report. The template guides the gathering of all pertinent information about the who, what, when, where, and how of the mishap. The content of the template isn't exactly new—it's actually the required information from OpNavInst 5102.1D (the mishap-reporting instruction). However, it's in a user-friendly format and will produce a comprehensive mishap report. The only new aspect of the template is a list of organizational questions that will assist in root-cause analysis. To access the template, go to the Naval Safety Center website at [www.safetycenter.navy.mil](http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil) and click on "PMV Investigations" under "Initiatives and Tools" at the bottom of the homepage.

### **Traffic Safety Quick Series Guide**

– This pocket-sized guide provides useful tools for tackling such problems as speeding, drinking and driving, and not wearing seat belts. Copies are available from the Communications and Marketing Department, Naval Safety Center. To get

copies mailed to you, e-mail LCdr. John Ruane at [john.ruane@navy.mil](mailto:john.ruane@navy.mil), or call him at (757) 444-3520 (DSN 564), ext. 7220.

**Traffic5100 (The Navy-Marine Corps Traffic Safety Handbook)** – This special supplement to *Sea&Shore*, which was published in 2006, offers hundreds of tips and ideas to help everyone from top leaders to deckplate workers face the problem that's threatening our mission readiness. In the major sections—Planning, Training, Driving, Preventing and Reporting—you'll find a wealth of ideas, guidance, news, and best practices you can adapt and apply at your command. To get copies mailed to you, e-mail LCdr. John Ruane at [john.ruane@navy.mil](mailto:john.ruane@navy.mil), or call him at (757) 444-3520 (DSN 564), ext. 7220. The handbook also is available online at <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/media/traffic5100/default.htm>.

Photo by Heather Schmaedeke





## Best Practices

**VAQ-133** – After a series of DUIs, this squadron held a high-impact, day-long stand-down featuring statistics, videos and stories about the impact alcohol has on society. Guest speakers explained how DUIs had affected their lives. Sessions for leaders covered how to recognize high-risk Sailors, ORM, and scenario-based discussions. The day ended with a field trip to a local jail and courthouse, where Sailors witnessed a mock sentencing and heard a detailed description of typical penalties for DUI offenses. For full details, go to: [http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/aviation/VAQ-133\\_DUI\\_Awareness.htm](http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/aviation/VAQ-133_DUI_Awareness.htm).


**HSL-44** – This squadron published its traffic-safety program in the form of an instruction, which says, in part, “Along with being a health hazard when consumed irresponsibly, alcohol becomes a catalyst of danger when mixed with motor vehicles. Not only automobiles but boats and aircraft shall not be operated while under the influence of alcohol. The Swamp Fox Safe Driving program is meant to give not only guidance but the tools for personnel of this command to make the right decision when faced with a potentially bad situation. Also, the avenue for change will be open to every member of HSL-44 through the Safe Driving Practices Incentive program discussed within this instruction. The aim of this instruction is to ensure that our valuable asset of personnel is not squandered in needless accidents.” The instruction lists incentives for workcenters that go 90 days without an alcohol-related incident. For full details, go to: [http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/traffic/HSL-44\\_traffic.htm](http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/traffic/HSL-44_traffic.htm).

### **Commander Naval Region Pearl Harbor**

– In a message issued in March 2004, RAdm. Bernard J. “Barry” McCullough implemented a program to suspend on-base driving privileges for military personnel who were arrested or ticketed by law-enforcement authorities, on or off-base, for serious traffic violations, pending disposition of the offenses by civil authorities or the regional security traffic-court administrator. That message was followed in December 2004 by one from the new base commander, RAdm. Michael C. Vitale. He strengthened traffic penalties to enforce compliance with safety standards and state and base traffic regulations; his ordered regionwide changes



became effective Jan. 1, 2005. For full details, go to: [http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/traffic/enforcement\\_of\\_base\\_traffic.htm](http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/traffic/enforcement_of_base_traffic.htm).

**HSC-2** – This squadron had two Sailors in two different states commit dangerous traffic offenses. One was arrested in Northern Virginia for doing 105 mph in a 65-mph zone. The other was arrested in North Carolina for doing 110 mph in a 70-mph zone. These two incidents, along with numerous other minor to major traffic violations and severe traffic accidents during late FY04 and early FY05 prompted the CO to establish an aggressive traffic-safety training and awareness program. He increased focus on training at indoctrination and during safety stand-downs and GMT sessions. He also stepped up investigations, tracking of data, and trend analysis of all traffic incidents and introduced stiffer and more timely disciplinary action to set an example and to reinforce policy. For full details, go to: [http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/aviation/traffic\\_safety\\_HSC-2.htm](http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/aviation/traffic_safety_HSC-2.htm). 

More best practices can be found at <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/traffic/default.htm>. The newer ones are at the top.

# Carl Vinson Sailors Learn DUI Realities

By MC2 Stephen Murphy,  
USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN-70)

**T**he safety department aboard USS *Carl Vinson* simulated sobriety testing with crew members and Northrop Grumman Newport News (NGNN) shipyard employees in the ship's hangar bay Sept. 22.

Wearing vision-impairment goggles, participants got to experience what it's like to be under the influence of alcohol and undergo a sobriety test while under that influence. Physical-security personnel from the ship administered the sobriety tests.

"We wanted to show people how alcohol can affect them," said ET2(SW) Kymberli Brzyski, *Carl Vinson's* traffic-safety coordinator. "We let them see firsthand what it's like to get pulled over and have to take a sobriety test.

"Some of the most common things you hear from people who are charged with DUI," said Petty Officer Brzyski, "are, 'I thought I had things under control, 'I only had one drink', or 'I didn't think it would happen to me.'"

Participants used goggles simulating the effects of alcohol at levels that represented what it was like to have had one drink, up to what it was like to have had enough drinks to put their BAC three times over Virginia's legal limit of 0.08. Impairment levels then were put to the test as *Carl Vinson* Sailors tried to walk a straight line, legibly write their name, or catch a football. Many participants said the event was an eye-opening experience.

"This makes me not want to drink and drive," said CSSN John Bradley Webb IV, of *Carl Vinson's* supply department.

Another participant weighed in with these comments, "It would be pretty ridiculous to think you could drive with your vision impaired like that," said AN Thomas Garcia, of the weapons department. "It's not worth my career, money or life."

Representatives from the legal department were on hand with some legal advice and to explain the consequences of a DUI conviction. With the combination of fines, court costs, and loss of driver's license, the cost of one DUI is between \$5,000 and \$20,000. Blood-alcohol readings between 0.08 and 0.14 will result in a one-year suspension of your driver's license. Someone with a BAC of 0.15 to 0.19 will receive a mandatory sentence of five days in jail, and, if you're found with a BAC of 0.20 or higher, the sentence is 10 days in jail.

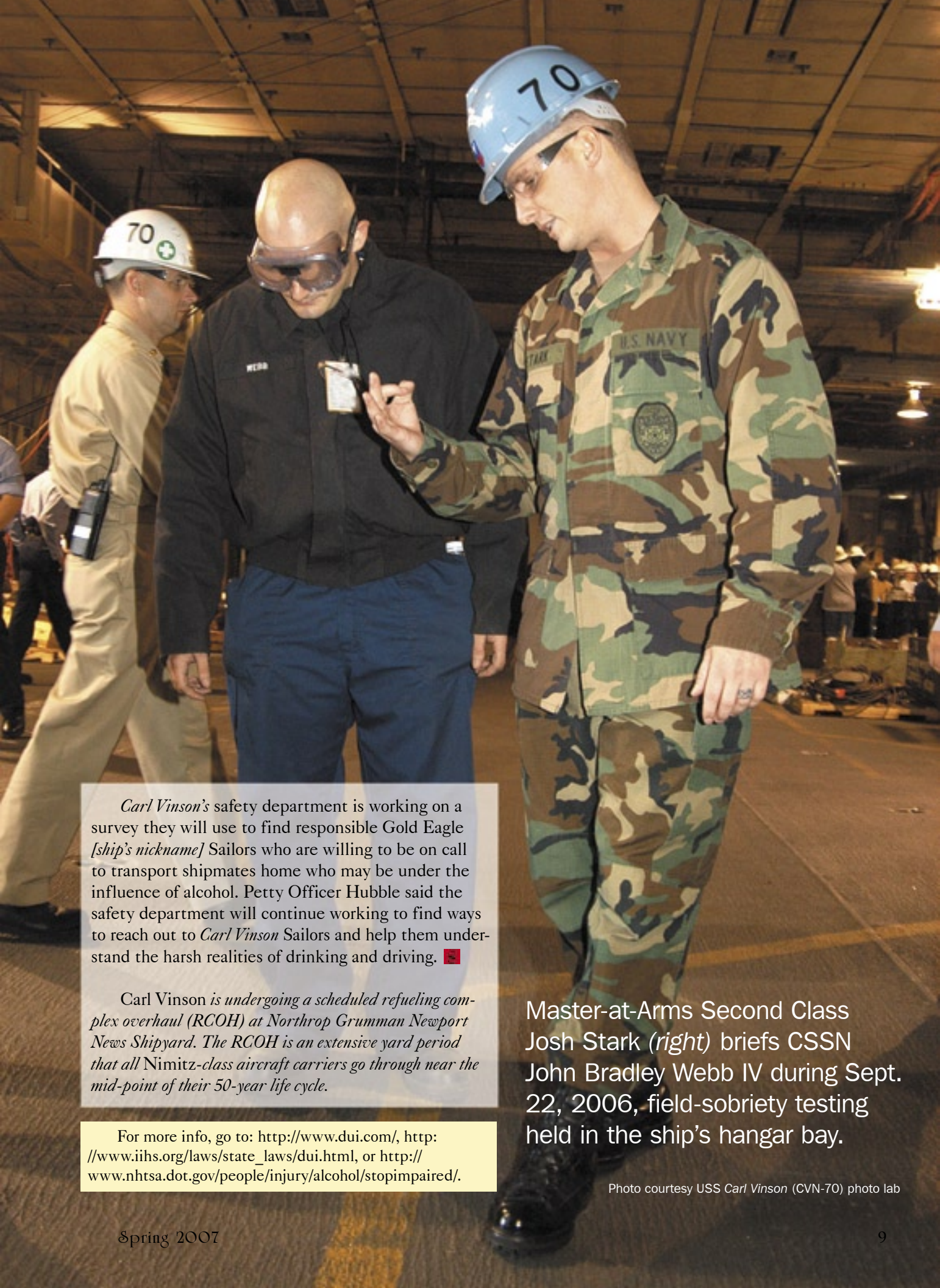
Said LN1(SW/AW) Anthony Hernandez. "When Sailors are released from jail, they will be escorted to the ship as a courtesy turnover. We will do our investigation, and, if they are found to have committed the offense, they will be written up, and non-judicial punishment (NJP) or court-martial will ensue."

Hernandez said *Carl Vinson* Sailors who are charged with DUI usually receive the maximum allowable punishment from the command. "They can look forward to a possible 45 days on restriction, 45 days of extra duty, and reduction in rank by one pay grade," he explained. "If they go to a summary court-martial, they are looking at up to 30 days' confinement."

*Carl Vinson* Sailors have some options to help them avoid DUIs, which include not drinking, using a designated driver, and taking advantage of the ship's free-ride program. Free-ride cards, obtainable through individual departments, ensure a free cab ride home for all Sailors who find themselves under the influence of alcohol.

"This latter option is the best one for *Carl Vinson* Sailors who are going to drink," said ET1(SW) Christopher Hubbel, the safety department's leading petty officer. "There are no repercussions for using them [free-ride cards], and they guarantee Sailors get home without harming themselves or anyone else."





*Carl Vinson's safety department is working on a survey they will use to find responsible Gold Eagle [ship's nickname] Sailors who are willing to be on call to transport shipmates home who may be under the influence of alcohol. Petty Officer Hubble said the safety department will continue working to find ways to reach out to Carl Vinson Sailors and help them understand the harsh realities of drinking and driving. 🚫*

*Carl Vinson is undergoing a scheduled refueling complex overhaul (RCOH) at Northrop Grumman Newport News Shipyard. The RCOH is an extensive yard period that all Nimitz-class aircraft carriers go through near the mid-point of their 50-year life cycle.*

For more info, go to: <http://www.dui.com/>, [http://www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/dui.html](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/dui.html), or <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/stopimpaired/>.

Master-at-Arms Second Class Josh Stark (right) briefs CSSN John Bradley Webb IV during Sept. 22, 2006, field-sobriety testing held in the ship's hangar bay.

Photo courtesy USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70) photo lab



# My Road-Trip Initiation

By Ens. Daniel Connell,  
VAQ-139

Few things are more exciting for someone in their early 20s than their first cross-country road trip. So when orders came in for my permanent change of station (PCS) move from Virginia Beach to Whidbey Island, my first phone call was to PJ, a buddy from home, telling him the news and asking if he wanted to join me.

As we prepared to leave Dam Neck in the rearview mirror, we noticed some minor hesitation in my more-than-a-decade-old car. We joked while rolling down the road, “There’ll we be: a tow truck driver and the two of us headed across country.” Too bad we don’t get paid for that type of clairvoyance.

The trip started off great—we hit places like St. Louis, Kansas City, and Denver. As we left a Rockies game in the Mile-High City, we decided to head toward Mount Rushmore. It would require a little backtracking, but you don’t get a chance to see that type of great American landmark every day. Besides, we had plenty of time to make it out west.

That night, the quiet hills of South Dakota rolled by, as we drove toward Sulfur Springs, S.D. In the morning, we continued on and, by 1000, were staring at the mountain with awe. After taking the obligatory

pictures, we headed west, this time toward Idaho. About 10 miles into Wyoming, near Devil’s Tower, the car decided to change our game plan.

We were heading up a slight incline when the transmission completely gave out. We realized imme-





diately that we were in a bad position. With little traffic (but plenty of antelope) around, help was scarce.

Our one lucky break was that we still had cell-phone coverage. I had an AAA membership and made a quick call, asking for help. After spending some time on the line, we convinced them to send a tow truck our way; however, it would take several hours to reach us from the nearest service center in Gillette, Wyo.

The next 24 hours consisted of buying a new-to-me used vehicle, loading all my household goods into it from the old car, and hitting the road again. Several thousands of dollars and hours of aggravation later, I was back on the road, with little time to spare. We made it to Seattle in time for my friend's flight home and I reported to my command on time. Thankfully, we didn't encounter any larger problems, even though the possibility had existed.

In retrospect, I did some things right, but I also did many things wrong. Having AAA coverage and a cellphone were a big help, as was having an extra driver. We had made the trip safely, alternating drivers and thus ensuring adequate rest. We further had stopped frequently. Where I ultimately failed was starting the long-distance drive without ensuring the vehicle was sound mechanically.

Some common-sense ideas for safe travel include using multiple drivers when possible and minimizing time between stops to ensure you have adequate time for any emergencies that arise. You also never should drink and drive. Make sure you have some type of roadside assistance package, such as USAA or AAA, and have basic supplies on hand, such as an extra quart of oil, a gallon of potable water, and a basic tool kit.

Remember to apply the principles of operational risk management (ORM), and don't discount playing the "what if" game, which can serve a cross-country driver well. Questions like "What if I break down out of cell range?" could lead to including water, blankets and some basic provisions on your packing list. This type of preparedness could improve your situation significantly should you become stranded for several hours before help arrives.

Here are some more tips from the [www.AAA.com](http://www.AAA.com) website for ensuring your cross-country adventure doesn't become a breakdown disaster:

### Before You Leave Home

- **Car Maintenance:** Check your vehicle's fluid levels, belts, hoses, and tires.
- **Review Your Map:** Know where you're going and how you'll get there.
- **In Case of Emergency:** Pack a flashlight, first-aid kit, and fire extinguisher, and always carry a cellphone.

### When Experiencing Car Trouble

- **Breakdown and You Can't Move:** Get everyone out of the vehicle and onto the shoulder, safely away from traffic. If you must walk to a phone, keep your group together.
- **Breakdown and You Can Move:** Get your vehicle off the roadway, onto the shoulder, and away from guardrails. Once safely off the road, stay inside/with your vehicle until a police officer or AAA road-service vehicle arrives.
- **Signs for Help:** Raise your hood, tie a white cloth to a door handle, or use reflective triangles.
- **Good Samaritan:** If someone approaches your car to help, roll down your window enough to ask him or her to call police (beware of a random person who may assault you).
- **Do Not Ride With Strangers:** Be wary if someone is overanxious to help.

The bottom line is: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. A bit of extra precaution and forethought can help avoid headaches on the road. ■

For more info, go to: <http://safety.com/articles/the-family-road-trip.html> or <http://www.travelsense.org/tips/roadtrip.asp>.



# Cited for Stealing



**T**hat's right: I got a Class "C" misdemeanor for allegedly being the getaway driver in a great conspiracy to steal an orange traffic cone, the kind you see around road-construction sites. I gotta tell you: That's a bad idea, especially when the cones are owned by the city of Corpus Christi, Texas.

One month after reporting to VT-10 in Pensacola for NFO training, I went to Corpus Christi for my buddy's wedding. I arrived there by commercial air about 2300 and went to a rental-car agency and got an upgrade to a Mustang convertible. The rental agency told me it was a brand new car and not to get a scratch on it. "Piece of cake," I thought.

After a few hours of hanging out at the hotel bar with my buddy and his brother, we figured we'd go see what was happening on Chaparral Street downtown. By the time we got there, though, the club we wanted to hit was closing down.

Just as we were about to leave, we saw an instructor we knew from Kingsville. He had an apartment

upstairs and invited us up for a couple of drinks. My buddy and his brother both had mixed drinks, but I went for a soda. That decision would prove to be—almost literally—a lifesaver later that night.

After hanging out there for a while, my buddy, his brother, and I decided to go for burgers. We pulled up to a stop sign on Chaparral Street, where my buddy and his brother suddenly jumped out and started playing with some orange traffic cones. They had been put out so pedestrians could walk through the street from one bar to another.

Things started to go badly when my buddy and his brother brought the cones back to the car. I told them to drop the cones before they got into the car, but, being drunk, they were not listening. I kept trying to get them to cooperate as I pulled away slowly from the stop sign and headed to the burger joint. Halfway through the intersection, I looked in the rearview mirror to find the Corpus Christi 5-0 on our tail.



# a Traffic Cone

At this point, I yelled, “Hey, lose those cones!” The cop pulled us over and asked the brother (in the back seat) to get out. Keep in mind that the Mustang is a two-door car, so my buddy (up front) started to get out to let his brother out. The cop told my buddy to stay in the car but once again ordered the brother to get out. As the brother reached down to undo his seat belt, the cop must have thought he was reaching for a weapon. The next thing I knew, the cop hauled the brother over the side of the open convertible, dragged him to the ground, and put cuffs on him.

At that point, my buddy got out of the car and yelled, “Hey what are you doing to my brother?”

could swing a dead cat at on the scene. One look at the building next to me as I got back in my car told me why we had so much company. The sign read: “Corpus Christi Police Department.”

Eventually, a police captain came to the driver’s door and started asking me questions. During this inquiry, I heard another cop say, “Hey, these two are drunk; go check the driver.”

I couldn’t help thinking, “Thank God I only had a soda earlier!”

The cops then said they were going to release the brother into my custody, but my buddy would have to spend the night in jail for allegedly “resisting

## At this point, I yelled, “Hey, lose those cones!”

Immediately, three other cops appeared, tackled my buddy, and started subduing him. I saw a cop hit him in the back of the head with a heavy flashlight. Another cop then came over to me, sitting in the driver’s seat, and asked me to get out of the car. Seeing what had happened to my two friends, my thoughts were, “Whatever you say, officer.”

One of Corpus Christi’s finest then put the cuffs on me and proceeded to search my pockets. When he found my military ID card, he turned to me and said, “You guys are officers; you should know better,” like he really needed to tell me that.


The police put my buddy and me in the back of a police cruiser and searched the rental car. I couldn’t help but think about how this was going to affect my career and my security-clearance application.

While we sat there, and in the midst of my buddy telling me how sorry he was, a tow truck pulled up next to the rental car I had been told to keep scratch-free. Eventually, the police pulled me out of the cruiser and explained that my buddy would have to spend the night in jail. The police also told me my buddy might not make it to his own wedding the next day. After I tried to explain our side of the story, the cop told me I could go sit in the rental car that they thankfully hadn’t towed away after all.

At that point, I looked around and saw there were five police cruisers and more cops than you

arrest.” Shortly, though, the police decided to release both guys into my custody as long as we went straight back to our hotel. They gave all three of us Class “C” misdemeanors for theft, although the citation didn’t mention it was for stealing traffic cones.

A few months later, I was able to get all charges against me dropped, but my buddy and his brother weren’t as lucky. They both took deferred adjudication, had to pay over \$400 in fines, and spent 90 days on probation.

Several lessons were learned that night. First, never drink and drive. If I had had anything more than a soda, I would have been looking at a DUI and the end of a short Navy career. Second, always have a designated driver. Third, when you’re the designated driver and babysitting drunks, treat them like kids: Keep a short leash on them, and use the child-safety locks to keep them in the car. While it may be funny to play with traffic cones, don’t steal them—certainly not in front of a cop and not in front of a police station! 

*Author’s name withheld by request.*

For more info, go to: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traffic\\_cone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traffic_cone) or [http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/020422fa\\_FACT2?020422fa\\_FACT2](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/020422fa_FACT2?020422fa_FACT2).

# Coast Guard to the Rescue

By YN1 Kirby L. Light, USCG,  
USCG ISC, Alameda, Calif.

**I**t had been a long, hot, tiring day for YN3 Tamycia Lucas and me. We had spent July 1, 2005, doing a household-goods inspection, repack, and reinventory in San Jose and were returning to Alameda. The last thing we wanted to see was Highway 580W traffic coming to a crawl. Nevertheless, that's what was happening.

I slowly proceeded to another lane and saw the problem: a major, single-vehicle accident in which the vehicle had rolled and was upside down. About 15 or 20 frantic civilians were on the scene, with no emergency personnel in sight.

Petty Officer Lucas immediately told me to pull over. As soon as I had worked my way to the shoulder,

she jumped out and ran toward the scene, with a man in a light-blue medical smock in close pursuit, followed by me. The guy in the blue smock disappeared once we arrived at the scene, and we never saw him again.

Once YN3 Lucas was at the accident site, she quickly assessed the situation. She noticed that a young, larger lady in a green medical smock was trying to care for a toddler (3 years old, as we would learn) still inside the crashed vehicle. The child was hanging upside down from her car seat, with blood on her head (from three cuts, as we eventually would learn), and she was screaming. Seeing that the lady couldn't reach far enough inside the vehicle to render the necessary aid to the toddler, YN3 Lucas ran to help.





Putting aside her own physical exhaustion and personal danger, YN3 Lucas forced her head and both arms into the rear passenger-side window of the crushed, unstable vehicle. She then held the cervical-spine while the other lady applied pressure to the child's cuts. Unfortunately, the lady only could get one arm (up to the elbow) inside, and, because she had to turn her head sideways to reach even that far, she had to rely on directions from YN3 Lucas, who had her own problems. She was standing on the side of a hill, at a 50-to-60-degree angle to the car. While directing the other lady, she also was talking, singing and telling nursery rhymes to the toddler. The youngster subsequently calmed down and quit trying to wiggle out of the car seat.

Meanwhile, I squeezed through the rear-passenger driver-side window, praying that the vehicle wouldn't crush down any more. I wanted to see if I could do anything else for the child. Once I was inside, YN3 Lucas instinctively said, "Don't undo the seat belt. Just call 911." Before backing out of the vehicle to make the call, I checked the child for other cuts or injuries but didn't see any.

I asked a man standing nearby if I could borrow his cellphone to call 911, while simultaneously checking the car for gas leaks or smoke—there were none. I got a recording and was placed on hold when I called 911, so I held onto the phone as I turned my attention to the child's bleeding, crying, and somewhat-hysterical mother. I asked a woman onlooker to hold onto the mother's neck and head and not to let her move while I checked her injuries. She had cuts on her right arm, blood in her hair, and she was crying out for her baby. I let her know her baby was OK, and she immediately calmed down.

Meanwhile, I still was on hold for the 911 operator, so I moved to the child's father. He was lying on his left side, sobbing and holding his right arm and shoulder, which he indicated had been injured. He wasn't bleeding, and I couldn't see any protruding broken bones, so I told him to lie still while I found someone to sit with him. As soon as I had located another woman to stay with him, I went back to check on YN3 Lucas' situation.

I still was on hold for the 911 operator when I spotted an 18-wheeler down the road. I hurried to where it was, climbed on board, and asked the driver to get on his radio and request an ambulance. At this point, the 911 operator finally came on the line. I quickly identified myself, informed him what had happened, and said we needed an ambulance. He started asking me questions, none of which I could

hear clearly, because of all the traffic noise. When the operator asked me to pinpoint our location, I couldn't help, but an older gentleman right behind me said he could, so I handed him the phone and asked that he provide the information.

I then ran to check on the mother and father—both seemed to be doing OK—so I again headed to the wrecked vehicle to see how YN3 Lucas was doing. As I reached her, a good Samaritan, who appeared only to speak Spanish, had crawled inside the vehicle and was trying to undo the child's seat belt. Petty Officer Lucas demanded that I grab the man's leg and force him to back out of the vehicle.

From there, I went back to the mother and father and, upon seeing them still being cared for, had an opportunity to notice that the chaos was starting to subside. It was interesting to me that, in the midst of so many onlookers, four women and one guy were the only ones who had put forth any effort to bring the situation under control.

Moments later, the first emergency vehicle arrived with two firefighters from the Alameda County Fire Department. I met the woman lieutenant as she got out of the vehicle and briefed her on the situation with the child, while the other firefighter went to care for the toddler's parents. Before I knew it, there were four police cars, one motorcycle policeman, three ambulances, and one or two EMS personnel on the scene, all taking care of the casualties.

Once the child was out of the wrecked vehicle and strapped to a backboard, she started receiving oxygen while being checked more closely for injuries. The ambulances soon were en route to an emergency room with all three casualties. Petty Officer Lucas and I asked a firefighter to hose the blood off us, and, when the police had released us, we took a short break to gather our wits, then got back on the freeway—three hours and 20 minutes after we had stopped.

Petty Officer Lucas and I went directly to base medical and told the OOD and the duty HS what had occurred. They started the procedures we had to follow, which included making a formal statement and having a medical exam.

Two days later, YN3 Lucas called the local children's hospital, where the toddler from the crash scene had been taken for treatment. She learned that the child was in critical but stable condition, thanks to her quick thinking and actions. If she hadn't taken charge like she did, this story likely would have had a much different ending. ■

For more info, go to: [http://www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/brochures/fast\\_facts/ffd116.htm](http://www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/brochures/fast_facts/ffd116.htm) or <http://www.whereincity.com/medical/articles/131>.

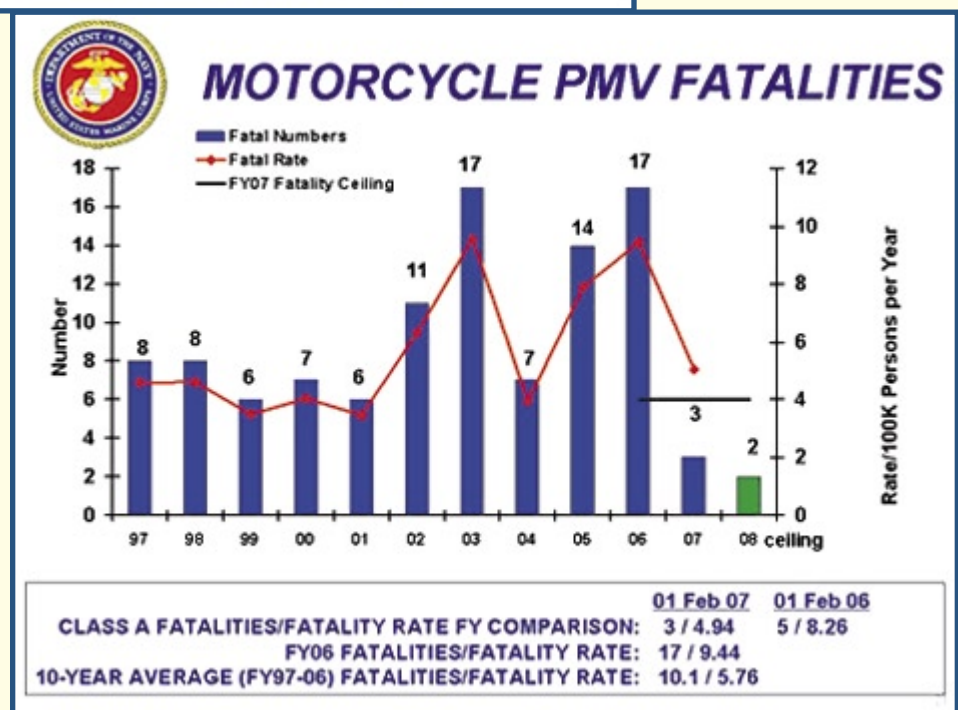
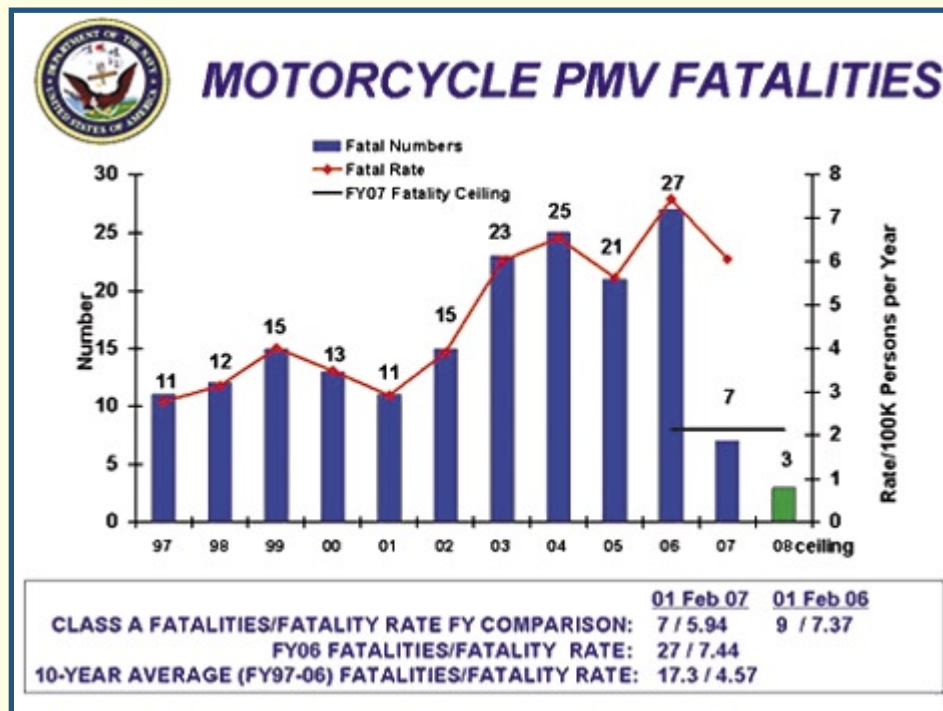
# Motorcycling: Journey to Adventure or Misadventure?

On a short hop or a cross-country tour, in solitude or with friends, motorcycling is the ultimate journey to fun, challenges, relaxation, and adventure.

When you ride a motorcycle, you're not merely passing through the scenery. You're an active participant in a journey that engages all your senses—from the salty bite of ocean air on the rim of the Pacific,

to the warmth of a Kansas sunrise on your shoulders, or the sight of the pure autumn colors of Vermont. Suddenly, even the long way home doesn't seem long enough.

Motorcycling is all these things...and more...and, unfortunately, it isn't all good. Consider, for example, these statistics.







Air Force photo by SSgt. Don Branum, USAF

## In the News

Motorcycle riders are at least three times more likely to die in a crash than automobile operators. Some fatalities involve riders who haven't obtained a proper motorcycle license or haven't taken the required motorcycle-safety training. Another part of the problem is a growing increase in fatalities among older riders, who may be just getting into or returning to motorcycling after several years. Helmets have proven to be effective in preventing many fatal injuries (estimated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to be 37 percent effective)—but they have to be worn.

Some riders are not in compliance with current instructions. Commands should identify service members who ride motorcycles and ensure they are licensed properly and have had the motorcycle-safety training required by OpNavInst 5100.12G or Marine Corps Order 5100.19E. Other suggested initiatives are as follows:

- Recommend service members use a Snell Memorial Foundation-approved helmet, rather than one just approved by the Department of Transportation. Snell helmets are more expensive but offer better protection.
- Ensure riders wear the proper protective clothing and equipment recommended in OpNavInst 5100.12G or Marine Corps Order 5100.19E.

## Short Narratives

**29 Jan 07** – An AW2 assigned to Surface Rescue Swimmer School died when he failed to negotiate a turn on his motorcycle. He was traveling at excessive speed.

**21 Jan 07** – A staff sergeant from 4TH MAW, MACG48, MASS 6 was riding with a group of motorcyclists when he failed to make a turn. His bike struck a guardrail, and he was hit by the motorcyclist following him.

**13 Jan 07** – An AO3 from HS-7 was killed in a motorcycle mishap.

**08 Jan 07** – An HM2 with the Naval Survival Training Institute was riding his motorcycle at high speed when he hit the back of an SUV and suffered fatal injuries.

**26 Dec 06** – A Marine private attached to CNATT Unit Lemoore lost control of his motorcycle in Crosby, Texas, and suffered fatal injuries.

**24 Dec 06** – An RP3 from NatNavMedCen Bethesda died from injuries he received in a motorcycle accident near Rocky Mount, N.C.

**16 Dec 06** – A PFC from H & S CO, Marine Corps Security Force Battalion, was riding his motorcycle in Norfolk when an SUV hit and killed him.

**09 Nov 06** – A sergeant from MARCENT HQ was killed in a motorcycle wreck in Northdale, Fla. He lost control in a curve.

**05 Nov 06** – A lieutenant lost control of his motorcycle in Washington state and was ejected into the path of a car that hit him. He suffered fatal injuries.

**04 Nov 06** – An AOAN from VFA-147 lost control of his motorcycle while doing wheelies in a neighborhood and suffered fatal injuries.

## Best Practices

**FltASWTraCen San Diego** – This command started a comprehensive motorcycle-safety program, run by a designated motorcycle-safety officer. The core of this initiative is a mentorship program specifically focused toward safe-riding practices. The program pairs inexperienced operators with experienced ones who ride similar motorcycles to help the new riders gain experience and safe skills. The program begins with an evaluation of the skill level of each rider. Mentors take the proteges out for check rides to evaluate actual skill levels. Novice riders then start on a training pipeline designed to help them gain proficiency. Riding events during the workweek facilitate rider evaluations. For full details, go to: [http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/ashore/Motorcycle\\_Mentorship\\_Prgm.htm](http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/ashore/Motorcycle_Mentorship_Prgm.htm). ■

For more motorcycle best practices, go to: <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/ashore/default.htm>.

# Back on the Iron Horse:

## Motorcycling After a Six-Month Deployment

By LCdr. Leonard Hennessy,  
VAQ-139

I learned to ride motorcycles more than a year ago by taking the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Basic Rider Course (BRC) at my last duty station in Norfolk. At the time, I'd never ridden before and had no plans to buy a motorcycle; I just thought it might be fun to try.

Shortly thereafter, I had to transfer to Whidbey Island on short notice. Knowing how much great riding was available there, I decided to get a bike after the move. Before I could purchase one, though, I needed to get a Washington license, which meant another trip through the BRC. Getting that course set up was pretty easy, and a month after moving to

Whidbey, I was a licensed owner comfortably riding my bike.

The squadron to which I was going had an upcoming deployment, so in my spare time, I put a lot of effort into practicing basic skills and getting used to traffic. I had a game plan for getting more proficient. Each week, I would build upon my existing skill set, doing longer and longer rides to different places to build my familiarity and confidence with the bike. After two months of riding, I felt very comfortable in traffic and on the state highways, especially given the fact it was raining a lot of the time. With our deployment right around the corner, I decided to store the





bike in my buddy's garage—my single-car garage already was full. I must note here that his driveway was about 25 feet long and really steep.

Six months passed. I was finishing up cruise as the squadron safety officer and looking forward to getting back to Whidbey for those great rides and hopefully some awesome weather. I had been thinking a lot about how to get back up to speed and, in so doing, recognized a lot of potential hazards I wanted to avoid. I decided to identify all those hazards.

My first concern was getting my bike out of the garage with that steep driveway. My bike weighs 644 pounds empty. I knew if I dropped it coming out of there, my slide with it down the driveway would be less than pleasurable. That fact got me to thinking

of a negative consequence might be. In spite of the beautiful 70-degree weather in Washington during the summer, the most immediate way to reduce chances of injury is always to use proper protective gear—in this case, the heavier motorcycle jacket with elbow, shoulder and back pads. Gloves and a helmet are worn without question, but there's always a temptation to shed the jacket on a gorgeous day.

After coming home from a six-month cruise, with too few ports, my desire to go out and celebrate was running high. That feeling, of course, highlighted the obvious problem with drinking and driving. However, riding a motorcycle takes far more coordination than driving a car, and if you're impaired, you can dump the bike while doing even the simplest maneuver. I'm

## My opinion about motorcycling is the same as how I feel about aviation: It's not inherently dangerous, but it is especially unforgiving of mistakes.

about how the bike maneuvers, particularly in counter-steering and at slow speeds. I knew I'd want to run up and down the streets around my friend's house a few times just to get a feel for the bike again. I then turned to thinking about traffic, wind blast, and most importantly, my "scan." In the BRC, they call it "rider radar": being alert to what's immediately in front of you, what's down ahead of you with a few seconds to react, and what's still further ahead, with plenty of time to react.

I also was very concerned about the pure "rust" on my abilities. Despite the fact I had been through the BRC twice in one year and had been riding and training on my own before the cruise started, I knew I wasn't ready to pick up where I had left off.

I figured there was a moderate chance I could get into trouble pretty quickly. However, my approach to biking thus far had been to treat certain aspects of it as sacred. I had been pretty conservative, wanting to ride as long as possible without wiping out for any reason. It seemed logical that any of the particular dangers from skills—be it rust or that steep driveway—had much less than a moderate chance of becoming a player, although their consequences likely would be severe.

I've always respected the law of averages and have based some actions on what the average chance

living by a strict standard these days: If I have even one drink in the afternoon, I'm done riding for the rest of that day and night.

My opinion about motorcycling is the same as how I feel about aviation: It's not inherently dangerous, but it is especially unforgiving of mistakes. Considering all these hazards before returning from cruise, my approach to getting back into riding was to review the basics and to ride often to keep the new skills honed. The net result of this mental preparation was a successful return to the road.

After getting back the feel for my bike, I went out a few times and practiced some of the basic riding procedures they teach in the BRC: counter-steering, slow-speed maneuvers, quick stops, and swerves, just to name a few. I keep reviewing these skills on every ride, even if it means pulling into an empty parking lot somewhere for 10 minutes.

The preparation and regular practice have yielded good results—and, by that, I mean I haven't gotten into any trouble in getting reacquainted with the bike. However, a few unexpected hazards have arisen in the process. For one, nearly all my experience has been during winter and in overcast or rainy conditions. I'm also surprised to realize that, at dusk, with the setting sun at your back, other drivers have trouble seeing a rider. I'm certain I've ridden head-on toward cars with



Sailors participate in the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Basic Rider Course, like the one the author had to take twice.

Navy photo by MC3 David Didier

the sun at my back, and they haven't seen me until the last minute. As taught in the BRC, I always ride with my headlight on bright during daytime hours. I'm also a lot quicker to slow down as I approach a car that appears to be ready to turn.

A second issue which hadn't occurred to me (but should have) was dehydration. I'm doing long rides now and am interested in making even longer trips. Having a good supply of water isn't the only important factor here; you also need to know how to carry it when you don't have saddlebags. I usually carry a backpack, but after a while, the straps tend to dig into my shoulders and cause stress. An alternative is to use magnetic bags that attach to the gas tank. The important lesson learned for me is to have water available somehow. The asphalt and air are pretty hot, and so is the bike; once you start putting on the PPE, it doesn't take long to sweat yourself into trouble.

Being away from the bike for months gave me time to think about all these hazards. I identified and assessed each one, which helped me get back into the riding environment safely and kept me motivated to know where my limits are.

You most likely realize the process I used to get myself back into riding shape again as operational risk management. Cases like mine show that ORM isn't just for on-the-job use. It can and must be applied to everything you do that involves risk. ■

For more info, go to: <http://www.motorcyclecruiser.com/streetsurvival/experience/> or <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/ashore/checklists/motorvehicle/motorcyclechecklist.htm>.



# “...The Tough Get Going”

By Ken Testorff,  
Naval Safety Center  
Photos courtesy [www.SmoothCurvesRacing.com](http://www.SmoothCurvesRacing.com)

“Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity; that has been my mantra for years—that’s what I live by,” says the 28-year-old, California-sportbike-racer Dawn Champion.

Born in Taipei, Taiwan, Dawn purchased her first motorcycle, a Kawasaki Ninja EX-250, five years ago, after suffering through a three-hour, 45-mile commute to work by car. “I taught myself how to ride that night,” she said. “It didn’t take long for me to realize, though, that surviving on the streets as a motorcyclist would require the right gear [*certainly more than the Rollerblade helmet, elbow pads, and knee pads she started with*], the right motorcycle, the right skills, and the right attitude. I got myself onto the track and began developing my motorcycling skills and philosophy.”

A week later, while nursing a number of bruises, Dawn had obtained a motorcycle license, and within two weeks, she had traded the Ninja for a more powerful Kawasaki ZX-6R. Her average time for the 45-mile commute fell to one hour—on bad days—but she had to face a fear factor. “I was terrified,” she admitted.

The more Dawn rode, though, the more she overcame her fear. Simultaneously, she also realized, however, how much she still needed to learn. She subsequently honed her skills [*on the twisting canyon roads in San Diego County and a track in Rosamond, north of Los Angeles*] to the point where racing became the next logical step. She finished her first race in third

On the track,  
Dawn Champion  
is all business.



place [*among 50 riders*], and with several subsequent third- through ninth-place finishes, she soon had a reputation, as well as the respect she was looking for. “I’m a firm believer that riding with smoothness and skill, accurately interpreting feedback from your bike, and adopting the right attitude are far superior to just riding as fast as you can go,” she explained.

Her refined yet aggressive style and unique look already have garnered many interesting opportunities in her fledgling riding career. As she noted, though, “I eagerly anticipate what is yet to come.” I should explain here that Dawn prepares for the worst, while expecting the best, and that preparation starts with her choice of safety gear.

For openers, she wears a Z-Custom Leathers full-leather suit, with a built-in back protector that’s double the thickness of regular back protectors. “It’s

A frame from Dawn's video shows the Honda Civic spinning out of control and nearing the point where it T-boned the left side of her bike.

not as heavy duty as my full racing suit with back protector, but it's a lot better than any regular one you buy," she assured. Her other riding gear consists of Sidi Race Vertebra boots, full gauntlet Teknic gloves, and Shoei top-of-the-line full-face helmet.

Dawn also wears one more important piece of gear—a piece that eliminates any possibility of a “he said, she said” situation from happening while she's out riding. She wears a helmet-cam on her helmet, connected to a Sony HC42 camcorder that resides in a fanny pack around her waist. The lightweight helmet-cam is the “eye,” and the camcorder records the footage on a MiniDV tape. Dawn decided to purchase the electronic equipment after a lot of research.

This gear paid for itself one Friday afternoon in early 2006, when Dawn was on her way home from work *[on her Yamaha YZF-R1]*. She was in the freeway's No. 1 (fast) lane, with a Honda Civic in an HOV lane, when the Honda's driver suddenly slammed on the brakes, locking up the wheels and losing control. The Honda swerved across the No. 1 lane and turned nearly 180 degrees before crossing into the No. 2 lane, where Dawn had moved to avoid collision. The car's right front panel T-boned the left side of her motorcycle, sending her rolling on the asphalt. *[The Honda's driver told police that Dawn's motorcycle hit him, but her cam video, which became an instant hit on the Internet, proved otherwise.]* Did I mention that right behind her at the time was, as she put it, “one of those monster Hummer things,” with a pack of other cars around it?

Within a couple days of her up-close-and-personal encounter with the asphalt, Dawn was back riding, which undoubtedly made some people chalk



up her close call to “just luck,” and that bothers her. Why? Because, according to her, “A lot of thought and preparation went into that moment and spelled the difference between life and death.” The same can’t be said for another motorcyclist, who, as Dawn noted, crashed a week later on a nearby freeway. All the circumstances mirrored her situation, yet the rider didn’t survive his crash. While no one ever will know for sure what made the difference, Dawn has her theories, “and it’s those theories that have kept me around this long,” she said.

“I’m not lucky at all—if I were, I’d have won the lottery years ago, and nothing bad ever would have happened to me. It’s just that, instead of whining about how unfair or hard life is, I learn from my mistakes and toughen up so I can take on the next challenge with my head held high. Nothing in life comes free. If you want it, you have to be willing to look for it, find it, learn it, and live it. Make your choices wisely. The only ‘luck’ you can count on is that which you create.”

Although Dawn’s street incident left a lasting impression, it pales in comparison to a couple crashes she has had on the track. The first one came Oct. 5, 2004, after three years of riding *[including two years*





A third-place finish in her first real race July 18, 2004, as a novice middleweight, earned Dawn the trophy she's proudly displaying here.

remember touching the front brake and wondering why the ride suddenly had gotten so bumpy. Then

*of riding on the track*] and 120,000 miles on bikes. She had a premonition she was about to take a spill. Two months earlier, she had told a friend, "I'm going to crash on the track..., and it's going to be a bad one."

She had had a bad feeling all day Oct. 5, but by day's end, nothing bad had happened, so she agreed to go out and play with some of the boys on the track. "There were three or four of us that headed out in the fast group," she said. "I was in the lead, picking up the pace as we went along. We soon were the group that was lapping everyone else on the track—we became the focus of the moment."

Dawn came up behind an old friend whom she knew she could pass, but she couldn't get a clean outside pass *[no inside passing was allowed this track day]*, so she decided to stay behind him for a few more laps. Starting into the fourth lap, she still was behind him and, becoming impatient, decided not to brake for turn No. 1. "I'll be past him before turn No. 2," she thought. She was next to him on the outside when she saw he was going wider than expected. "This pass will be closer than I thought," she realized. In full lean, she touched the front brake *[rear brake wasn't working]*, and the real "fun" began.

"All those eyes that had been on our group for all these laps," said Dawn, "saw my bike and me lowside, hit the dirt at 120 mph *[at an angle]*, and get pitched up in the air, cartwheeling out into the desert. I

I heard a whooosh, which was followed by silence. It was while thinking, 'Hey, that wasn't half bad!' that I opened my eyes to find myself high in the air, beginning a long and fast descent. Thoughts of 'Whoa, I'm flying!' quickly turned to 'Ah crap, this is gonna hurt!'

"I remember sliding across the desert, watching the rocks fly by two inches from my face, with only the plastic of my faceshield protecting me. When the faceshield finally ripped off, I closed my eyes so the debris only would hit my face. I eventually was able to roll onto my back, but I still was flying so fast the effort sent me tumbling. I curled into a tight ball and tried to relax all my muscles and just go with the flow.

"Once I came to a halt, I opened my eyes, made sure I really had stopped, did a quick inventory of body parts, and raised my head to see if I was in the impact zone. I was so far out in the desert *[about 80 feet]* I couldn't even see the track. At that moment, I remembered the familiar phrase, 'If I can't see it, then it can't see me...' I then looked for my bike and saw it a few feet away—I could tell it was totaled *[the only thing on the bike that wasn't bent or beat up was maybe the engine]*. Feeling a sense of great loss overcome me, I laid my head down again and waited for reinforcements. The ambulance and staff were at my side in moments."

Despite the broken ribs, fingers and wrist; concussion; bumps; and bruises she suffered, Dawn was back

## Here are remnants of Dawn's bike after her first track crash Oct. 5, 2004.

racing 11 days later—this time, though, as an expert, not a novice. She would be racing against some people who had been racing longer than she had been alive. The competition in this race was on a whole different level. By turn No. 6 of the first lap, she wanted to quit the race but finally conquered her fears and convinced herself to stay.

Dawn was drafting another rider as they approached turn No. 9, with plans to pass him on the exit of the turn. She quickly shifted gears and gunned the throttle, only to realize she was closing in on him too fast. "I swerved to the left and tried to squeeze past him next to the dirt," said Dawn, "but he stuck out his left leg and moved left. Time froze for a moment as I thought, 'I'm not going to make it—there's nowhere else for me to go.' I suddenly fully realized exactly how fast 130-plus mph really is. The three or four feet separating us disappeared quickly and, as impact occurred, I wondered, for the first time, if I would be OK."

What Dawn hadn't realized in time was that the racer in front of her was braking [*e.g., race bikes have no brake lights*] and moving left to stop because he



had seen a red flag up by the finish line. The red flag meant that someone needed an ambulance, and under the race rules, everyone had to stop on the track to allow the ambulance to roll out. Because of controversy already surrounding the red-flag rule, Dawn's crash caused it to be changed. The new rule requires everyone to "reduce speed and safely come in off the track."

Paramedics found Dawn lying next to the green pit wall. They weren't sure if she had hit it and bounced off, or if she had landed there. Once at the hospital, she learned she had many broken bones [*15 at last count, some of which weren't found until 3.5 weeks after the crash, among them a broken jaw and skull fracture*], torn ligaments and tendons, deep cuts, contusions, bumps, and bruises. Many said she should have been dead.

Doctors wanted to schedule four different surgeries, but Dawn turned them all away. They instead put her leg in a cast [*for six to eight weeks*], which she promptly cut off a half-hour later when she got home. At two weeks, she was taking her first steps; at three weeks, she discarded the crutches and was able



Here's what Dawn's bike looked like after her Oct. 16, 2004 crash.



## Dawn enjoys a lighthearted moment in the 2002 Pontiac Trans Am she once owned.

to walk with a limp; at four weeks, she was riding and trying to recover the atrophied muscles; and, at five weeks, she completed a 200-mile canyon run, trying to get herself back in shape.

Dawn refers to this crash as “a good thing. A lot of growing came out of recovering from it,” she said, “a lot of realizations, new decisions, new thoughts, new ideas, new understandings, new resolutions—not just about riding but my entire life.”

When asked to name one skill she feels is important for all riders to have, Dawn quickly responded, “Knowing how to fall.” As she explained, the first thing martial-arts instructors teach is how to fall, not how to throw a punch. Why? Because they know everyone makes mistakes, and knowing how to minimize the damage of those mistakes improves your chances to keep learning. “When you make mistakes, learn from them, and then get up and move on, knowing you’ll make more in the future,” she said.

Dawn was surprised when an old-timer from Australia e-mailed her, saying how surprised he was a “youngster” like her knew about the importance of knowing how to fall. It turns out this old-timer, back in the day, was a stunt rider. He said schools existed back then to teach riders how to fall—off the back of slow-moving trucks and in full gear. “Obviously, with today’s liability issues,” noted Dawn, “lessons like that probably aren’t available anymore. But, it does show I’m not the first to see the truth in those skills, and I feel they are worth reviving again in the minds of today’s riders.”

Riding and racing motorcycles aren’t Dawn’s only interests. She also loves horses and horseback riding. “I enjoy the perfect balance of solitude and partnership found in such activities,” she said. She also likes cats—she currently has two calicos that were rescued when they were just kittens.

Another interest is cars, dating back to the collection of Hot Wheels she had as a 5-year-old. Her favorite Hot Wheels were a Pontiac Firebird and a 1976 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray. The list of vehicles she has owned starts with a 1974 Ford Pinto (a bright orange one), a burgundy 2001 Toyota Corolla, a silver 2001 Toyota 4-Runner, a 2002 Pontiac Grand Prix, a firecracker-red 2002 Pontiac Trans Am (with the WS6



package, brand spanking new from the dealership), and currently, a 2003 Toyota Tacoma double-cab pickup.

And, Dawn loves music—lots and lots of music. She can play piano well enough to convince people she can play, unless, as she qualifies it, “they stick around longer than three minutes.” She also can play guitar well enough to be, in her words, “amusing around the campfire after a day of dirt biking.” One day, she wants to find time to take lessons so she can play more.

Last but certainly not least is Dawn’s boyfriend, Andy. The two of them own a house together in Norco, Calif., one with room to build a dream garage, so they can service and repair their own motorcycles.

Dawn’s dedication, attitude and skill set on the race track have gained the respect of her peers, both male and female. Her desire, however, is to be an example for other young girls and women to follow. I want to show them what is possible when you put your heart, mind and soul into pursuing dreams,” she said. ■

For more info, go to Dawn’s website: [www.SmoothCurvesRacing.com](http://www.SmoothCurvesRacing.com).

# No Laughing Matter



By Ens. Michael Sieber,  
VFA-146

**M**arch 25 was an eventful day for me: It was the first time I got to ride my new motorcycle, and it was the first time I got to ride in an ambulance.

I just had received the new Harley-Davidson I had ordered during the last deployment. Because it had been a long time since I had ridden, I decided to take things slow until I got used to riding again. I had my license, had taken a motorcycle-safety course, and had ridden before. So, even though it was my first time on a Harley, I was confident I would have no problems. After all, the only way to get experience on a big Harley is to ride one.

Because of the way it's made and because it weighs 714 pounds, the Harley has a heavier turn than

I was used to. Even my friend's Valkyrie Interstate (a very big bike) requires less effort to turn. I also noticed the clutch was a little stiffer. I should have paid more attention to both differences.

As soon as I started riding, the mechanics started coming back to me. It's amazing how your muscles can remember what they're supposed to do. I was riding around town, enjoying the feel again. I especially was enjoying riding my own Harley.

I soon started looking for more places to ride and remembered the general area where another squadron officer lived. I had been to his house once before and thought I could find it. I decided to show off my new motorcycle, and having to spend time riding around to find his house was an added bonus.



His house was at the end of a cul-de-sac, so I parked next to the curb, at the end of the street. Everything was OK until I got ready to leave. I was busy talking and didn't pay enough attention to what I was about to do. As I took off, I forgot about the stronger clutch. Instead of my letting it off slowly and easing away from the curb, the clutch slipped out, and I took off faster than intended.

"No problem," I thought. "I'll just make a shorter turn." The only problem was that I also had forgotten about the heavier turn. Before I could react, the bike hit the curb, flipping machine and rider into the grass.

As soon as I sat up, I knew something was wrong: My right arm was flopped backward, in the opposite direction from where it's supposed to go. It didn't hurt—yet—because I was too upset with myself. A few years earlier, I had been out riding and watched a guy in front of me do almost the same thing. I couldn't believe he had made such a simple mistake, and now I just had done the same thing.

When the ambulance had taken me to the emergency room, X-rays showed that I had dislocated my elbow. By the time doctors had put it back in place, my arm had turned pale, cold and clammy. The misplaced bone was cutting off circulation. I had torn the ligaments around my elbow and stretched out the nerves. The doctors told me I was lucky I hadn't damaged the nerves; they also said it was unusual I hadn't broken any bones.

Once I returned to work, I heard all the expected jokes—I even added a few of my own. After all, our squadron just had had a motorcycle-safety meeting the first day I was on my new motorcycle, which, incidentally, made it through the crash with no damage. I told people I threw myself under the bike to protect it.

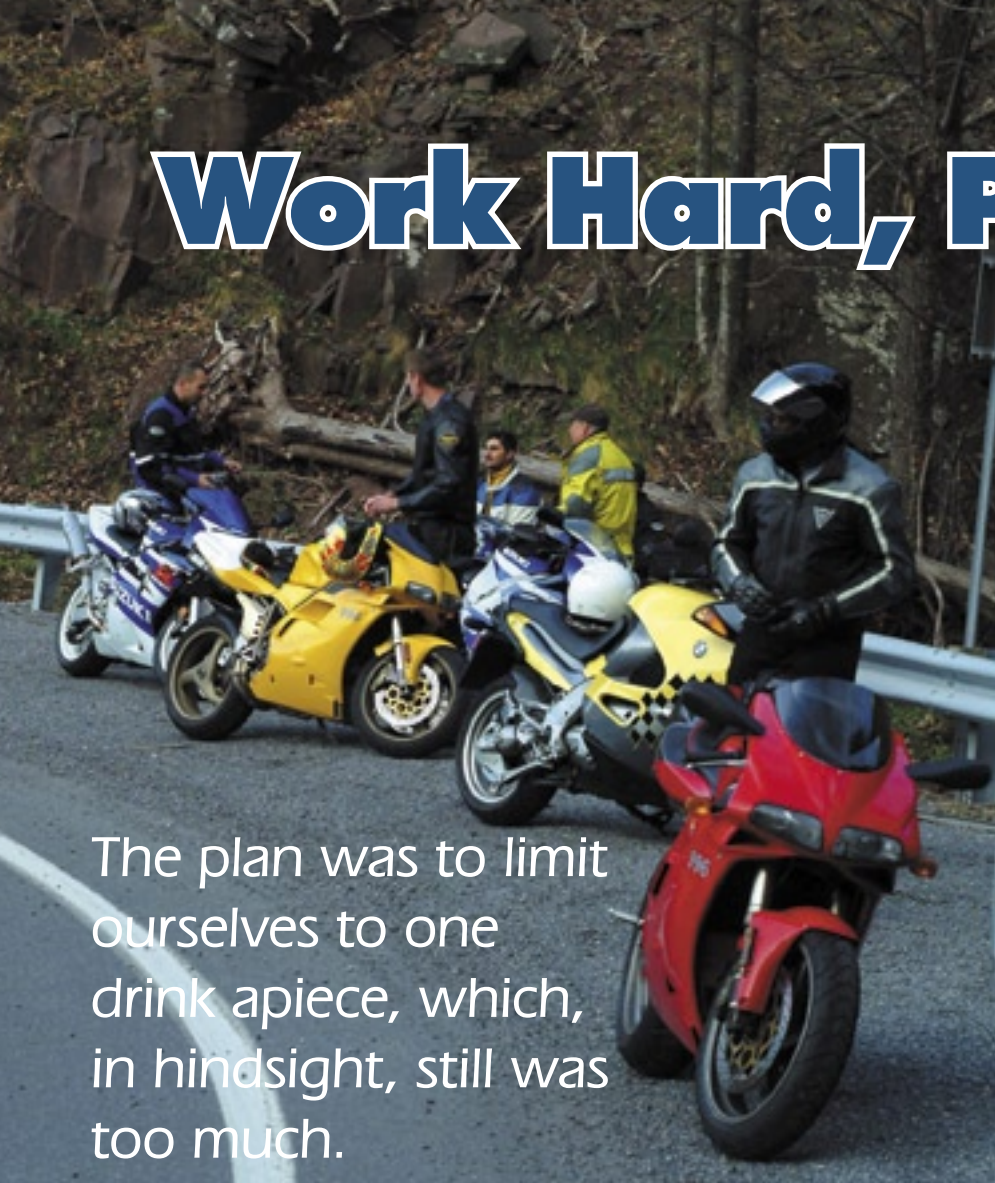
The incident became less funny to me after learning I never would regain a full range of motion in my arm. And, after spending a couple days doing everything with my left hand (I'm right-handed), a little more humor wore off. Simple things like cooking dinner or tying my shoes became a real challenge. Even sleeping isn't so easy any more.

With the warm, sunny weather that California is famous for looming on the horizon, I'll be forced to spend all of it just looking at my motorcycle sitting in the garage. That's especially painful because I had wanted a Fat Boy for about 15 years—and they've only been making them for 16 years. Instead of riding, I'll be in a brace for six weeks, followed by physical therapy. I won't be able to ride for three months. So, trust me—motorcycle safety is no laughing matter. ■



For more info, go to: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/motorcycle/motosafety.html> or <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/Ashore/articles/motorvehicle/decisiontoride.htm>.

# Work Hard, Play Hard.



The plan was to limit ourselves to one drink apiece, which, in hindsight, still was too much.

**I**t was like any other Friday for Marines, who work hard and play hard. After working 10 hours, John (my roommate) and I went home and made some calls to see what the plan was for later on that evening. The two of us ate dinner and washed it down with a single beer.

Our friend, Mike, showed up at our house about 7 p.m., and the three of us decided to ride our bikes to a popular dance club about 50 miles away. We called Bob, another rider, and asked him to join us. Because Mike didn't have his bike with him, he left before the rest of us to go get it, with plans to meet us at a designated gas station.

Once dressed for the cool night air, we mounted up and headed for the gas station, where we met Mike, topped off our sport bikes, and set out on the highway we would follow for most of the trip. Bob and I were riding new 1000cc bikes. Mike had a lighter bike that was a couple years old, and John was on a

600cc bike that was a few years older than that. What we didn't know was that this night would prove to be both unforgettable and regrettable.

All four of us had done our share of wheelies and stunts, but they weren't part of our mission this particular night. Our speed, however, was slightly above the limit, which would figure in the laundry list of questionable variables. On a positive note, the four of us all had at least two years of riding experience.

We arrived at the club without incident about 10 p.m. and headed for the bar. The plan was to limit ourselves to one drink apiece, which, in hindsight, still was too much. Although our BAC remained under the legal limit, it was enough to slow our reaction time and to sway our balance and judgment. We danced for a few hours—until the lights came on, and people started leaving—then headed for the door ourselves.

Once again we stopped at a gas station, this time for non-alcoholic drinks and cigarettes. While there, we met two girls who wanted to hang out with us; they decided to follow us to Denny's. They only finished their water, though, before leaving, so the four of us set out for the trip home.

Bob and I ended up about five minutes in front of John and Mike because of a red light. We stayed in the far left lane most of the time, unless we were passing someone, and we kept our speed at 80 to 90 mph. Our riding pattern was staggered or beside each other, but we switched back and forth.

Eventually, I realized Bob no longer was with me. I looked back and to the sides, to no avail, and mistakenly assumed he just had slowed down for the others. I maintained my speed for another exit or two, then got off for gas when my fuel-low light illuminated. I was filling up when my cellphone rang. It was John, asking if Bob was with me. John said he and Mike had seen a bike like Bob's wrecked alongside the highway.



# ..Die Young

My heart skipped a beat, and I swallowed hard, as I asked where they had seen the bike. I backtracked down the highway until I saw blue lights on the opposite side, got off at the next exit, and then took the onramp to get back on the highway. My stomach was playing tricks with me when I merged into traffic just long enough to get around the bright display of blue and red lights.

I quickly slowed, eased onto the right shoulder, and was dismounting my bike when I saw Mike leaning against a concrete barrier—the one that, as I soon would learn, had claimed the life of my friend. In front of Mike was a tarp spread out, obviously covering Bob's lifeless body. Not wanting to accept the tragedy of the moment, I walked toward Mike and the tarp. Mike looked up at me and, with tears running down his cheeks, said, "He's dead, man." My eyes instantly filled with tears, too.

A police officer pulled me to the side to question me about the events leading to Bob's fatal crash. Mike already had sent John home, so he wouldn't have to see the scene. Once the cops had gotten all the info they needed, they sent us on our way. Mike and I stayed within the speed limit the rest of the way home. The next morning, we went to our unit and had to explain what had happened.

## An analysis

These experienced Marines had taken similar trips in the past without incident. They were not operating outside their limits in any one area, so why the tragic outcome?

- **Alcohol:** The plan was for one drink apiece at the bar, but the victim consumed more than just one. Was he legally drunk? No, but his balance and reaction time definitely were impaired.

- **Fatigue:** The victim had been awake 22 hours, with 10 hours spent at work. Studies show that, after being awake 24 hours, your impairment is similar to 0.10 BAC. The victim's fatigue level was approximately equivalent to 0.08 BAC.

## Reason's Swiss Cheese Model



- **Speed:** Is 80 or 90 mph too fast for a "crotch rocket"? Probably not, but does that speed leave you enough time to react to traffic or other unknown factors? Definitely not!

- **Traffic/Road Conditions:** This variable is one you cannot control. You only can leave yourself enough time and space to make the necessary adjustments.

Too many risk factors lined up this tragic evening [see accompanying graphic]. When you combine the alcohol and fatigue factors, the victim's ability to operate a motorcycle was way over the limit. His speed gave him less time to react to traffic and road conditions.

Marines take risks every day, so we become accustomed to them—to the point we sometimes take excess risk without knowing it. If you're older and reading this story, you're probably saying to yourself, "This accident was one waiting to happen." A younger person, on the other hand, probably would say it's just a case of "bad luck." But, it wasn't luck that killed this Marine. He simply placed himself in a situation where several seemingly minor risk factors added up to disaster. ■

*Author's name withheld by request.*

*The Naval Safety Center did not do the analysis you read here, nor do we endorse all the findings contained herein. — Ed.*

For more info, go to: <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/ashore/articles/motorvehicle/decisiontoride.htm> or [www.motorcyclecruiser.com/streetsurvival/impaired\\_rider/](http://www.motorcyclecruiser.com/streetsurvival/impaired_rider/).

# My Visit With Two People Who Made **Bad Choices**

By MSgt. Larry Stulz, USAF,  
445th AW/Safety

Every now and then, we all see things that tend to make us stop and think about how precious life is and how our whole world can change in an instant. My wife and I own two English cocker spaniels that are registered therapy dogs, which we take to local hospitals and nursing homes. Our purpose is to brighten the day of those who need all the love and attention they can get.

A visit last weekend is one I'll remember for a long time. In a room normally filled with senior citizens sat a 30-something man at a table with a lady. He stood out from all the others because he was wearing a muscle shirt that revealed tattoos—mean ones—on both arms, from hands to shoulders. The lady at the table waved for us to bring over the dogs.

Navy photo by JOC David Rush







Photo by Matthew J. Thomas

...and drivers who don't always buckle up may find themselves in the same pickle as the two victims in this story.

As I neared, I noticed that huge rings—each one emblazoned with skull and crossbones, knives, and guns—adorned the man's fingers. The lady introduced us to Ron, who, she said, was recovering from a brain injury he had incurred five months ago in a motorcycle mishap.

Since I'm a safety manager, I knew there had to be more to this story and thought quickly on how I could get all the facts without seeming too forward. "Did the motorcycle helmet malfunction during the mishap?" I asked.

"He wasn't wearing one," she replied.

Ron then said something while petting the dogs, but I couldn't understand at first because his words sounded like those from an intoxicated person. As I would learn, he had said, "I had dogs once." The lady explained that Ron hadn't been expected to live at the time of the mishap, but that now, hopefully, he would recover enough to take care of himself one day.

We then were directed to a 30-something lady with a shaved head, who was rocking back and forth in her wheelchair. She had a smile that would brighten anyone's day. Because her body was curled partly into a fetal position, I gently placed one dog on her lap. Her face immediately lit up with excitement, and she tried her best to laugh. I became concerned that the dogs might be too lively for her when I noticed a fresh surgical incision in her head. Staples ran from one ear to the other. My wife, who is a nurse, took over and made sure the dogs didn't hurt her.

Meanwhile, I stepped back and talked to one of the nursing assistants and asked about the lady's condition. I learned she had been a typical soccer mom several months earlier, but a vehicle mishap had left her with a brain injury from which she likely never will recover. She wasn't wearing a seat belt at the time of the crash. I learned her two young children and husband had been in earlier that day to visit but that she doesn't recognize any of them.

I had a hard time concentrating the rest of that day; I found my thoughts constantly going back to those two people and the lifestyles they once had led with their families. Their unfortunate conditions made me realize just how fast one's whole world can change.

In our society, those who have suffered injuries dictating long recovery times often tend to disappear from life's normal day-to-day activities. This situation is compounded when we forget about them or fail to learn from their experiences.

I couldn't take photos of those two people at the nursing home to use as examples of what can happen when you make a wrong choice. I only can tell their stories to others and include a reminder that life as you know it this moment can change in the next tick of the clock's second hand. ■

For more info, go to: [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/motorcycle/609CruisinWeb/images/Crusin'without.pdf](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/motorcycle/609CruisinWeb/images/Crusin'without.pdf), [www.saferoads.org/press/press2004/pr\\_HelmetRelease5-24-04.htm](http://www.saferoads.org/press/press2004/pr_HelmetRelease5-24-04.htm), <http://odp.nih.gov/consensus/1998/1998TraumaticBrainInjury109html.htm>, or <http://www.tdi-dog.org/>.

# A Ride in the Country

By AO3 J. Liskey,  
VAQ-139

There I was, waiting for the post office to open on an absolutely beautiful day in Washington. The plan was to pick up some parts (a carbon-fiber windscreen and titanium racing exhaust) I recently had ordered, fix my motorcycle, and then go for a ride.

We just had returned from work-ups the previous day, and I was anxious to enjoy the nice weather since we only get a few good, dry months a year. At exactly 0830, the post office opened, and a few moments later, I was on my way home to install the new parts. In another hour and a half, the job was complete.

I decided to run some errands and to find someone to join me for a ride. About 1100, I headed to a friend's house to see if he was interested. We both decided on a route and agreed I would follow him, since I was unfamiliar with the area. We left his house at noon and rode until my fuel light came on before stopping to fill our small 4.5-gallon tanks and to get some water. We chuckled at a newspaper article we saw at the gas station about a guy on a sportbike (like the ones we had) riding a wheelie somewhere in the Seattle area.

Once we were hydrated and our tanks were topped off, we headed toward Darrington, where we planned



Before and after shots of the bike.



to grab some food before heading back to Oak Harbor. The ride so far was going smoothly. We had hit some winding sections of road, as well as a couple straightaways, all the while maintaining the posted speed limit.

A few miles outside Concrete, we ran into a little traffic but were OK until we tried to pass a green truck that constantly was speeding up or slowing down. Each time we tried to pass, he would turn on his left-turn signal and take up both lanes. We eventually came to a section of road where we could pass.

I was ahead of the truck when I checked my mirror and turned my head to see if I had enough space to move over. I had the room, so I turned on my blinker and changed lanes while going 60 in a 55-mph zone. The next thing I knew, the bike started going down. I turned loose of the handlebars as soon as I realized there would be no recovery—a decision that probably saved my life. I rolled and slid about 40 feet, got right back on my feet, and went to my bike, which had wedged under a guardrail.

## The next thing I knew, the bike started going down.

By this time, people had stopped, except for the guy in the green truck I had passed. Witnesses told me the truck took off after clipping my back end. After repeatedly having to tell people I was OK, I finally realized why they kept asking about my condition. My jeans were ripped open all the way down my left leg, and I had severe road rash. My left arm also wouldn't move for a spell, so I needed help removing my jacket. About the time I was able to move my left arm again, my buddy returned. He finally had noticed I wasn't following him any longer. Once at the crash site, he started picking up debris from the road.

It was when the ambulance arrived and the adrenaline had worn off that I realized I couldn't put any weight on my right foot. Another problem was blood gushing from a cut on my chin (caused by the chinstrap). Doctors at the hospital put stitches in my



chin and cleaned the road rash to my left leg, left and right hips, and the outside of my right hand.

In talking to a state trooper, I learned that all the witnesses' stories had been the same and that this case probably would be ruled a felony hit and run. He said I had been doing everything right, including wearing all the proper PPE.

What did I learn from this incident? First, you can have an accident, even when you're doing everything correctly. I had taken all the proper classes, had all the appropriate documentation and insurance for riding my motorcycle, and was riding conservatively. Second, wearing the proper PPE can't be over-emphasized. You would be reading a very different article if I hadn't been wearing all the required safety gear. My initial investment in quality equipment more than paid for itself, given my lack of serious injuries in this crash.

Finally, we should have pulled over, taken a break, and let the guy in the truck put some distance between him and us. He obviously was having some issues with our trying to pass him. Although we had the laws and rules of the road on our side, we were vulnerable to his angry driving.

Thanks to having full coverage on my bike, it's now time to get a new one. ■

For more info, go to: <http://www.drdriving.org/>, <http://www.aaafoundation.org/quizzes/index.cfm?button=aggressive>, <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/media/ashore/issues/Summer02/howtoavoid.htm>, or <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/about/outreach/dsweek/rage.htm>.





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